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PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

NOTIFICATION.

FORT ST. GEORGE, THE 24th DECEMBER 1919.

No. 352.—The Royal Assent to the Government of India Bill lately passed by both Houses of Parliament in England having been signified, the following Royal Proclamation is published:—

PROCLAMATION.

GEORGE V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the sea, King, Defender of Faith, Emperor of India:

To My Viceroy and Governor-General, to the Princes of the Indian States and to all My subjects in India of whatever race and creed:

ORDERING:

I. Another epoch has been reached to-day in the annals of India. I have given My Royal assent to an Act which will take its place among the great historical measures passed by the Parliament of this Realm for the better Government of India and the greater contentment of her people. The Acts of 1773 and 1784 were designed to establish a regular system of administration and justice under the Honorable East India Company. The Act of 1833 opened the door for Indians to public office and employment. The Act of 1858 transferred the administration from the Company to the Crown and laid the foundations of the public life which exists in India to-day. The Act of 1861 sowed the seed of representative institutions and the seed was quickened into life by the Act of 1909. The Act which has now become law entrusts the elected representatives of the people with a definite share of the government and points the way to responsible government hereafter. If, as I confidently hope, the policy which this Act inaugurates should achieve its purpose, the results will be momentous in the story of human progress; and it is timely and fitting that I should invite you to-day to consider the past and to join me in My hopes of the future.

2 Ever since the welfare of India was committed to Us it has been held as a sacred trust by Our Royal House and Line. In 1858 Queen Victoria of revered memory solemnly declared: "Herself bound to Her Indian subjects by the same obligations of duty as to all Her other subjects; and She secured to them religious freedom and the equal and impartial protection of the law. In His message to the Indian people in 1905 My dear Father, King Edward VII, announced: "His intention to maintain unimpaired the main forms of humane and equitable administration. Again in His Proclamation of 1908 He renewed the assurances which had been given fifty years before and surveyed the progress which they had inspired. On My accession to the Throne in 1910 I sent a message to the Prince and People of India acknowledging their loyalty and homage and promising that the prosperity and happiness of India should always be to me of the highest interest and concern. In the following years I visited India and testified My sympathy for the people and My desire for their well-being.

3. While these are the sentiments of affection and devotion by which I and My predecessors have been animated, the Parliament and the people of this Realm and My officers in India have been equally anxious for the moral and material advancement of India. We have endeavored to give to her people the many blessings which Providence has bestowed upon Ourselves. But there is one gift which yet remains without which the progress of a country cannot be consummated: the right of her people to manage her affairs and safeguard her interests. The denial of India against foreign aggression is a duty, an Imperial interest and pride. The control of her domestic concerns is a burden which India may well aspire to take upon her shoulders. The burden is too heavy to be borne in full until time and experience have brought the necessary strength. But opportunity will now be given for experience to grow and for responsibility to increase with the capacity for its fulfilment.

4. I have watched with understanding and sympathy the growing desire of My Indian people for representative institutions. Starting from small beginnings this ambition has steadily strengthened its hold upon the intellects of the country. It has pursued its course along constitutional channels with sincerity and courage. It has survived the discredit which at times and in places is where men sought to cast upon it by acts of violence committed under the guise of patriotism. It has been stirred to more vigorous life by the ideals for which the British Commonwealth fought in the Great War, and it claims support in the part India has taken in our common struggles, aspirations and victories. In truth the desire after political responsibility has its source at the root of the British connexion with India. It has sprung inevitably from the deeper and wider shades of human thought and history which that connexion has opened to the Indian people. Without it the work of the British in India would have been incomplete. It was therefore with a wise judgment that the beginnings of representative institutions were laid many years ago. Their scope has been extended stage by stage until there now lies before us a definite step on the road to responsible Government.

5. With the same sympathy and with redoubled interest I shall watch the progress along this road. The path will not be easy and is arduous towards the goal there will be need for perseverance and for forbearance between all sections and masses of My people in India. I am confident that these high qualities will be forthcoming. I rely on the new popular assemblies to interpret wisely the wishes of those whom they represent and not to forget the interests of the masses who have yet to be admitted to the franchise. I rely on the leaders of the people, the ministers of the future, to feel responsibility, to sacrifice much for the interest of the State, remembering that true patriotism transcends party and communal boundaries; and while retaining the confidence of the legislatures, to co-operate with My officers for the common good in seeking unessential differences and in maintaining the essential standpoint of a just and prudent Government. Equally do I rely upon My officers to respect their new colleagues and to work with them in harmony and kindness; to assist the people and their representatives in an orderly advance towards free institutions; and to find in their new task opportunities to fulfil as in the past the highest purpose of faithful service to My people.

6. It is My earnest desire at this time that so far as possible any trace of bitterness between My people and those who are responsible to My government should be obliterated. Let those who in their eagerness for political progress have broken the law in the past respect it in the future. Let it become possible for those who are charged with the maintenance of peaceful and orderly government to forget the extravagances they have had to curb. A new era is opening. Let it begin with a common determination among My people and My officers to work together for a common purpose. I therefore direct My Viceroy to exercise in My name and on My behalf My Royal clemency to political offenders in the fullest measure which in his judgment is compatible with public safety. I desire him to extend it on this condition to persons who for purposes of State or under any special or emergency legislation are suffering imprisonment or restraint upon their liberty. I trust that this leniency will be justified by the future conduct of those whom it benefits and that all My subjects will so dress themselves as to render it unnecessary to enforce the laws for each offence hereafter.

7. Simultaneously with the new constitution in British India I have assented to the establishment of a Chamber of Princes. I trust its counsel may be fruitful of lasting good to the Princes and the States themselves and may advance the interests which are common to their territories and to British India and may be to the advantage of the Empire as a whole. I take this occasion again to assure the Princes of India of My determination ever to maintain unimpaired their privileges, rights and dignities.

8. It is My intention to send My dear son, the Prince of Wales, to India next winter to inaugurate on My behalf the new Chamber of Princes and the new Constitution in British India. May he find mutual goodwill and confidence existing among those on whom will rest the future service of the country, so that success may crown their labours and progressive enlightenment may attend their administration. And with all My people I pray to Almighty God that by His wisdom and under His guidance India may be led to greater prosperity and contentment and may grow to the fulness of political freedom.

(By order of His Excellency the Governor in Council.)

E. A. GRADHAM,
Acting Chief Secretary.